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Letter dated 5 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Attached herewith is the national report of Norway on gender equality and the empowerment of women, for the annual ministerial review to be held during the high-level segment of the 2010 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Council, under item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Morten **Wetland**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2010/100.

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Annex to the letter dated 5 May 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

National report of Norway on gender equality and the empowerment of women for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council

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I. Executive summary

National achievements in the field of gender equality

1. Over the last 40 years there has been rapid growth in economic activities among women in Norway. Close to 80 per cent of all women age 25-66 are in the labour force. The fertility rate is high at 1.98 compared with the European Union (at 1.53) and other industrialized countries. The gender perspective has been mainstreamed into most areas and sectors of public life. Norway has implemented various policies to allow people the possibility of combining family and work life. The use of different affirmative actions has been vital to increase women's participation in decision-making. Norway has in place strong legislation for gender equality and combating discrimination. The Equality Ombud, which ensures the enforcement of the gender equality legislation, has been an institution since 1979. Some of the key lessons learned so far are that the welfare state has been crucial for women's liberation and gender equality. The tripartite cooperation between employers' organizations, the trade unions and the State, together with research institutions, has played a central role in the development of a modern welfare state. An active women's movement, with a strong focus on gender equality and family issues, has also been important. Social change depends on profound political will. However, Norway still faces some challenges. Although Norwegian women take part in working life to almost the same extent as men, many women work part-time. Still, girls' and women's educational choices and women's occupational choices are highly gender-segregated, hence the segregated labour market in Norway. Furthermore, women on average earn 15 per cent less than men per hour.

International development cooperation

2. Gender equality is at the core of Norway's international development cooperation. Girls' education, maternal health and women, peace and security are key areas of intervention.

II. Implementation of national strategies and policy

1.1. Main results in the field of gender equality

1.1.1. Progressive gender equality policies

3. The last 40 years have seen substantial equality between the genders come true, with vast changes in Norwegian culture, politics and economic life. There has been rapid growth in economic activities among women in the past decades. Close to 80 per cent of all women age 25-66 are in the labour force. High workforce participation is among the main reasons for cohesion of economic differences between women and men. Norway has a high fertility rate at 1.98 compared with the European Union (with an average fertility rate at 1.53) and other industrialized countries. A'though Norwegian women take part in working life to almost the same extent as men, many work part-time and they do not work in the same occupations, industries or sectors as men. According to our national budget, human resources contribute to 82 per cent of the national wealth. The oil industry contributes to 7 per cent of national wealth. Women's contribution to the economy is decisive to ensure sustainable economic growth and development.

4. A robust economy is essential to any nation in order to develop a sustainable welfare state. Modern societies need to utilize all human resources, regardless of gender; and regardless of disability, ethnicity, religion, age and sexual orientation.

5. The welfare state has been crucial for women's liberation and gender equality for two reasons: the welfare sector jobs have provided opportunities for women from the 1960s and onwards; moving women from the informal economy — homemaking, agriculture etc. — to the formal economy. In addition, public services have made it easier for most women to combine labour market participation with family responsibilities.

6. Since the 1960s, the tripartite cooperation between the employers' organizations, the trade unions and the State and the cooperation with research institutions has played a central role in the development of the modern welfare state. Norway has for a long time had an active women's movement setting the agenda for women's economic participation. This has been the background for the designing of structures and reforms that allow women and men to combine family and work life and to share parental responsibilities. The lesson learned so far is that social change can only come as a result of an active political will.

1.1.2. Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting

7. Since the late 1980s, Norway has implemented action programmes to support the incorporation of gender equality as an integral element of all Government policy areas. Norway follows the recommendation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995 in Beijing, which states that the gender equality perspective should be mainstreamed into all areas and sectors, combined with targeted policies and measures. At the government level, gender mainstreaming means that each ministry is responsible for matters relating to gender equality in its own area of responsibility.

8. In 2005, the Government issued instructions for official studies and reports concerning consequence assessment, submissions and review procedures in connection with official studies, regulations, propositions and reports to the Storting. The instructions state that the consequences for gender equality, are to be assessed and evaluated if relevant.

9. The Gender Equality Act, section 1a, states a duty for both the public and the private sector to promote gender equality and to report on the equality activities. The act is enforced by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud. The duty also applies to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and employee and employers' organizations.

10. In 2005, the main budget circular from the Ministry of Finance introduced guidelines on how the ministries are to carry out a gender equality assessment of their own budget areas. It is up to each ministry to decide which policy sectors they see fit to be subjected to such gender-sensitive analysis, and for such analysis to be included in their budget propositions. The aim is to consider the effects that various political decisions have on women and men, girls and boys with a view to promoting gender equality.

1.1.3. Legal framework and the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud

11. Legal protection against discrimination is necessary in order to ensure equality. The Gender Equality Act provides the framework for all efforts to promote gender equality in Norway. The Act prohibits all discrimination on the grounds of gender, but is aimed particularly at strengthening the position of women. It applies to all areas of society.

12. Since 1979, Norway has had a Gender Equality Ombud. In 2006, the new Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud and Tribunal were established to ensure a comprehensive enforcement of discrimination on all grounds.

13. A proposal to further strengthen the legal framework on discrimination was submitted to the Cabinet in official report No. 14 of 2009. The report has undergone a public hearing in 2009. The proposal in the report includes a bill with a broad perspective, prohibiting discrimination in all areas of society, on all grounds, including gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation and age. A comprehensive approach may be a way of providing a more effective protection from discrimination in general and of ensuring an effective protection from multiple discrimination. The Cabinet intends to submit a bill containing a comprehensive protection against discrimination in 2012.

14. In the second quarter of 2010, the Working Environment Act, the Gender Equality Act, the Act on Anti-Discrimination Ombud and the Act on Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility were amended. One result of these amendments is that it is forbidden by law to ask about a woman's pregnancy when hiring. The amendments entered into force on 9 April 2010.

15. The Gender Equality Act and the Working Environment Act have also been amended in order to limit the possibilities for religious communities to treat people unequally on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation when hiring for a specific position. Discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in religious communities must be justified.

1.1.4. Combining family and work life

Equal parenthood

16. One of the major goals of Norwegian gender equality policy has been to facilitate the participation of women in the labour market and in leadership on an equal footing with men. Legal protection against dismissal during pregnancy and the right to paid parental leave are important measures in this sense. It is also important to recognize men's responsibility for caregiving tasks and other work in the home on an equal footing with women. There is a clear intention that fathers should take on part of the responsibility for the care of their children. In Norway parenthood has also gone through essential changes in the last decades. In a typical family today both parents work outside the home and they share caregiving tasks to a greater extent than before. The most recent amendments in the Children Act aim at further ensuring equality in parenthood. The amendments include a wider definition of the child's right of access to the parents. Furthermore, the courts are provided with the competence to decide on shared place of residence for the child if it is in the best interests of the child. The amendments will enter into force by 1 July 2010.

The welfare system

17. The State has a facilitating role in providing people with the possibility of combining work and family life. Norway has several generous welfare arrangements that allow people to combine their work life and economic activities with their family life and childcare. The welfare system includes arrangements such as paid parental leave (including maternity leave and the father's quota), subsidized day-care institutions and day-care facilities for schoolchildren, the right to paid leave when a child below the age of 12 is sick (10 days), flexible working hours for parents responsible for the care of young children and cash support. In principle, all these arrangements are gender-neutral, which means they can be used by either parent. Parental benefits are earned through paid employment at a minimum average annual income. A person must have worked for at least 6 out of 10 months in order to have the right to paid parental leave. Paid employment is also a condition for some of the other benefits through the social security schemes. This is an incentive to take part in working life.

Paid parental leave and the father's quota

18. Mothers still take most of the parental leave and they work part-time far more often than fathers do. Norway was the first country in the world to provide fathers with a legal right to paid parental leave that is non-transferable to mothers (1993). The father's quota has contributed to changing the conception and understanding of the father's role, but also to the changing of stereotypical cultural attitudes. Also, paid parental leave and other parental benefits contribute to a more equal sharing of domestic and family tasks between women and men. These arrangements contribute to both equal opportunities and an equal output. The father's quota of 10 weeks is included in the parental leave that is either 46 weeks (100 per cent pay) or 56 weeks (80 per cent pay). The Cabinet has, through is political platform, declared its intention to expand the father's quota from 10 to 14 weeks and to further expand the total parental benefits period from 46 to 48 weeks with 100 per cent pay.

19. So far, about 90 per cent of the fathers that are entitled to parental leave take leave of absence. About one out of five fathers who are entitled to parental leave take leave of absence beyond the father's quota.

Kindergarten coverage

20. Kindergarten is important for parents, who wish to combine family responsibilities with their working life. A statutory right to kindergarten was introduced in 2009. Kindergarten coverage nationwide was 80.4 per cent in the 1-5 age group (school starts at the age of 6 in Norway). Norway introduced a maximum limit for parents' payment for kindergarten in 2004.

1.1.5. Women's participation in decision-making

21. The Norwegian experience is that targeted and affirmative action and legislation are necessary to ensure gender equality. The use of quotas has proven to be a successful measure for accelerating changes in society. In the 1970s, some political parties adopted quotas on their electoral lists on a voluntary basis. Since 1991, all Governments have kept the unwritten rule of at least 40 per cent gender balance in the Cabinet. Today, the gender balance in the Cabinet is complete, with 50/50 per cent representation of women and men.

22. Since 1981, the Gender Equality Act has contained a clause requiring at least 40 per cent gender balance in Government-appointed and other public appointed committees. The provision has been important for women's participation in public governance and a precursor for similar provisions relating to representation on boards of directors of public limited companies.

23. In 1993, the Municipal Act included the requirement of a 40-60 per cent gender balance in all politically appointed public committees for the Municipal Council.

24. In 2003, it was made mandatory by law for all State-owned companies, inter-municipal companies and public limited companies to have at least 40 per cent gender balance in company boards. (The latter types of companies have a broad spread of shares.) In 2010, women have taken more than 40 per cent of the boardroom positions in the companies affected by this regulation.

25. In June 2009, the Municipal Act was amended so that companies owned by municipalities and other corporations, in which municipalities or counties own at least two thirds of the shares, are required to have 40 per cent gender balance on their boards. The act entered into force on 1 January 2010 and has a transitional period of two years.

1.2. Political initiatives

26. In February 2010, the Cabinet appointed a committee that was given the task of viewing gender equality policy in Norway using a life-cycle analysis, as well as from a class and ethnicity perspective. The aim was to provide a foundation for a modern, comprehensive and knowledge-based gender equality policy. The committee received a two-year deadline to submit its report.

27. Earlier in the same month, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion appointed a Women's Panel to carry out a visionary debate about what is important for today's women and about what it is that creates inequality, and about how to create social engagement and move away from traditional gender roles.

1.3. Remaining challenges

1.3.1. Labour market strategies

Equal pay for work of equal value

28. Eradication of gender-based unequal pay is one of the goals of the Government's income policies, according to the Cabinet's political platform. An official Norwegian report on gender and pay was submitted to the Cabinet in March 2008. The report shows that women on average earn 15 per cent less per hour than men. The Cabinet has, through its political platform, declared its intention to follow up the proposals in the Commission's report through tripartite cooperation between employers' organizations, trade unions and the State.

Gender-segregated labour market

29. The labour market in Norway is characterized by gender segregation and by the pay gap between women and men. The problem of equal pay is not only a

question of individual pay differences based on gender. Lack of equal pay also has to do with the highly gender-segregated labour market and the price of labour in the occupations and sectors that are dominated by women.

30. The pay level is generally lower in occupations where the proportion of women is high. In general, women receive less in return for their education and experience than men do. This is especially due to the fact that many women work in the public sector, which has lower wage levels and a more compact pay structure than the private sector. The reasons why men and women choose to work in different occupations and sectors are complex. It has to do with the individual employee's preferences, norms, gender roles in the family and financial needs (supply side) and with labour market factors, such as the way employers organize working hours either on a full-time basis or a part-time basis (demand side).

Part-time work

Voluntary part-time work

31. The right to work part-time and to flexible working hours has been recognized as a way to strengthen women's participation in the labour market. Many women choose to work close to full-time (80-90 per cent) over long periods of their professional lives. Today 62 per cent of the students at the colleges and universities in Norway are women. There has been a slight fall in the number of women working part-time and a slight increase in the number of men working part-time. With an ageing population it is important to uphold a high employment rate. This includes part-time work. The Government's pension reform stimulates all employees to continue working as long as possible. The fact that women continue to do most of the work in the home is an important factor in understanding why women choose to work part-time.[1] Men, on average, have higher hourly pay than women. Women themselves also say that consideration for the family is the reason why they have not given priority to their professional career.

Involuntary part-time work

32. A person in an involuntary part-time position is referred to as underemployed. There has been a slight decline in the level of involuntary part-time work over the past 10 years. However, the level of involuntary part-time work is still too high. The latest figures show that about 60,000 employees are in involuntary part-time jobs. This is a problem for the individuals but also for society as a whole. The Cabinet has, through its political platform, declared its intention to strengthen efforts against involuntary part-time work and the right to full-time work, and to consider new legislation to achieve this. A recent amendment to the Working Environment Act gives an employee in a part-time job the right to an extended position before the employer can appointment a new person to a new position in the business. However, the preferential right is conditional on not causing substantial harm to the business and on the employee being qualified for the new position.

Women with a minority background

33. There is a need to improve the access and participation of women with minority backgrounds in the labour market. Enhanced economic equality for women

[1] Time use survey by Statistics Norway (2009).

with minority backgrounds is a prioritized objective for the Government. The Introduction Programme for newly arrived immigrants and the Second Chance Programme are important measures in this sense. The Government also has specific measures to improve recruitment of persons with an immigrant background to vacant positions in the Government sector and State-owned enterprises. Through the latest Action Plan to Promote Equality and Prevent Ethnic Discrimination 2009-2012 the Government has introduced mentoring programmes for women with a minority background and other measures relating to the labour market.

1.3.2. Strategies to combat stereotypical cultural attitudes

Men, male roles and gender equality

34. Gender equality is about both men and women. One of the main challenges of today is that boys and men often do not identify with, or engage in, gender equality. Changing stereotypical gender roles and identifying traditions, roles and notions that reproduce inequality, is one of the priority areas of the Government's gender equality policies. In 2008, the Cabinet presented a white paper document to Parliament on "Men, Male Roles and Gender Equality". The purpose of the white paper was to gather factual material and data on men and male roles. The engagement of boys and men is crucial if Norway is to reach its goal of full gender equality.

Choices of education and professions

35. Boys and girls still tend to make different choices with regard to education and professions. The choices are highly gender-segregated, especially in secondary schools and colleges. However, there are certain positive signs in education at the university level that choices reproducing gender segregation are declining. The proportion of women students has increased from 48 per cent in 1980 to more than 60 per cent in 2008. Professions, such as medicine and law, that used to be dominated by men, now have a majority of women.

36. In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Research launched an Action Plan for Equality in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education (2008-2010). The action plan proposes a number of measures in order to improve the balance between genders, including in the educational choices that children and teenagers make, as well as the gender balance of employees within the educational sector.

1.3.3. Strategies to combat gender-based violence

Introduction

37. The Norwegian position is clear: no religion, culture or tradition can ever serve as an excuse for violence against women. All use of violence is prohibited by Norwegian law and must be prevented and combated. Domestic violence against women, children or men is not a private matter, but should be dealt with by the authorities. Women are more likely to experience partner-related violence than men, and women are subject to the most serious acts of violence. A lot has been done by the police, public authorities and the shelter movement. Attitudes and mentalities are changing and will continue to change in this area. Use of violence is unconditionally prosecuted by the public authorities, regardless of whether the perpetrator and the victim are related to one another. The Government's efforts to combat domestic

violence follow from the new Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence 2008-2011. In March 2010 the Storting adopted an amendment to the Children Act, which states that all use of violence against children is prohibited, even when it occurs in the context of the upbringing of the child, and that frightening or disturbing behaviour towards children is also prohibited. The amendment will enter into force by June 2010.

Shelter services

38. A new act entered into force on 1 January 2010, that provides a statutory duty for local authorities to provide shelter services and coordinated assistance for victims of violence. The shelters are available for everyone exposed to violence in close relationships and to young people exposed to forced marriages and human trafficking. This entails a duty for the local authorities to ensure that women, men and children are given comprehensive assistance and follow-up in the form of coordinated crisis centre services for the users.

39. The act takes two different gender perspectives into account: the first perspective is to promote special equality for women by ensuring a particular protection to the group that is most exposed to violence in close relationships. The second perspective is to promote general equality between the sexes because men and women, who are exposed to violence in close relationships, should be given an equal offer in relation to the actual need for emergency assistance. The act states that the residential arrangements should be physically separated for women and men.

Trafficking in Human Beings

40. The first Plan of Action was launched in 2003. The Government will launch the fourth Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking in mid-2010. The legal protection of victims of trafficking in Norway is strengthened through the new Immigration Act. The new Immigration Act states that a former victim of trafficking can be eligible for refugee status. Both amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2010. A presumed victim of human trafficking may be granted a temporary permit for six months if the alleged victim is willing to receive assistance and to consider reporting human traffickers. This is the so-called reflection period. Being a victim of trafficking can be considered as a possible humanitarian concern when considering granting a residence permit.

Female genital mutilation

41. The third Action Plan against Female Genital Mutilation (2008-2011) involves national, regional and local authorities in the health sector, the police, schools and educational institutions, among others. The authorities have close cooperation with diaspora organizations. Changing perceptions and attitudes will take time. In 2010, Norway offers counselling and voluntary genital examination to all girls and women who have immigrated to Norway from areas where, according to the World Health Organization, the incidence of female genital mutilation is 30 per cent or more.

Forced marriages

42. There are still challenges in combating forced marriage. The Cabinet has given the work against forced marriage high priority by presenting the third Action Plan

against Forced Marriage for a period of four years in 2008. The primary target group is young women and men who are threatened with, or subjected to, forced marriage. Norway has also made several amendments to immigration legislation with a view to countering forced marriages. The rules regarding maintenance requirements in relation to family immigration now include stricter requirements as regards the income of the reference person.

III. International development cooperation

2.1. Main priorities

43. Since 2006, women's rights and gender equality are at the core of international cooperation. In 2008, the Government presented to the Storting report No. 11 (2008-2009) entitled "On Equal Terms: Women's Rights and Gender Equality in International Development Policy", setting out seven overarching principles:

- Women and men are to participate on equal terms in political processes.
- Women and men are to participate on equal terms in economic processes.
- Women and men are to have equal access to education.
- Women are to have a right to adequate health services and to control their own bodies and sexuality.
- Women are to have a right to a life free of violence.
- Women are to have an equal role in peace and reconciliation efforts.
- Women and men are to participate on equal terms in efforts to combat climate change, environmental degradation and humanitarian crises.

44. The Action Plan on Women's Rights and Gender Equality launched in 2007 sets out the framework for implementation, following a twin-track strategy of targeted activities and mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout the whole breadth of Norwegian development policy. Involving men and boys as partners for gender equality, promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights and a life-cycle perspective are integral elements of the strategy.

45. Education for girls has long been a high priority. Norwegian support for this area is primarily channelled through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Norway is giving 1 billion Norwegian kroner (approximately USD 180 million) over two years (2009-2010) to the UNICEF education and gender equality programme. Support for this area also includes the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, a partnership that includes broad participation on the part of the United Nations system, national authorities, donor countries, NGOs, civil society and private actors.

46. Since 2007, nearly NOK 600 million a year has been earmarked for women's rights and gender equality. Gender-focused bilateral aid has increased through all budget chapters. In 2009, this amounted to NOK 5.2 billion. This is more than double compared with 2006 and represents an increase in the period from 20 per cent of total aid to 28 per cent. Progress is measured and reported in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' annual budget proposal (proposition No. 1 to the Storting).

47. FOKUS (Forum for Women and Development) is our most important national partner in the field of women and development. FOKUS is made up of more than 70 women's organizations in Norway, and has a large number of partner organizations in the South. It receives funding from the Ministry and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Its budget has increased from NOK 18 million in 2006 to NOK 31 million in 2010. NORAD requires NGOs to mainstream women's rights and gender equality into their work. At the multilateral level, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is a key partner, and Norwegian core funding has increased from NOK 20 million in 2006 to its current level of NOK 75 million.

2.1.1. Maternal and child health

48. Worldwide, 8.8 million children under the age of 5 die each year. According to the United Nations, more than half a million women die of complications related to pregnancy and birth. The situation is particularly serious in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Most die of illnesses or complications that can easily be prevented or treated.

49. The Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals was launched by Norway's Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg in cooperation with the United Nations General Assembly in September 2007. Norway's initiative to improve maternal and child health entailed an allocation of NOK 500 million. The initiative has both a bilateral and a multilateral component. The Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals results in increased and more flexible funding, and helps to remove bottlenecks that impede performance at the national and local levels. The Network of Global Leaders, which was initiated by Norway and is led by the Prime Minister, promotes political backing and advocacy for the health-related Millennium Development Goals. The aim is to mobilize Heads of State and Government in a political network, and to encourage a clearer political leadership to improve maternal and child health. It is important to support the organizations that seek to improve women's and children's access to health services and to strengthen their rights.

50. Mr. Stoltenberg has raised the profile of maternal and child health within the High-level Taskforce on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems. Further, Norway took an active part in drawing up a five-point joint strategy for Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5, including health-care systems at the country level that provide free health services for women, young people and children. The shortage of health workers in many poor countries is a major challenge, and steps are being taken to address this. Efforts are under way to develop robust, long-term national financing systems for the health Millennium Development Goals, including trying out results-based financing for child, maternal and reproductive health.

51. Norway aims to further integrate efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 with women's empowerment (Millennium Development Goal 3) and their right to control their own bodies and sexuality.

2.1.2. Women, peace and security

52. Norway's national Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) was launched in 2006. The action plan

aims to strengthen Norway's efforts to increase the participation of women in civil and military peace operations, peace mediation and peacebuilding. The proportion of women in the Norwegian Armed Forces is increasing, albeit slowly, from 7 per cent in 2005 to 8.6 per cent in 2010. Military service is still only compulsory for men, but from 2010, women will be called in to an obligatory interview. The Norwegian Police University College was close to reaching its target of 40 per cent women in the 2009 student intake and women accounted for 40 per cent of Police and District Police employees at the end of 2008. Today, the Crisis Response Pool, which provides advice and assistance in connection with institution-building in the judicial system in former war zones, has 87 members, including 33 per cent women.

53. Norway has continuously exerted political pressure and urged the United Nations to increase the recruitment of women at all levels of peace processes. NOK 30 million a year is earmarked for strengthening the participation of women and increasing the gender perspective in peace negotiations. Norway has provided economic support for local women's groups working on peace issues at the grass-roots level as well as women's political participation in several conflict and post-conflict countries.

54. The Norwegian Armed Forces are upgrading their teaching on gender issues and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The Norwegian Armed Forces have deployed gender field advisers to the mission in Afghanistan, and have also introduced a directive on behaviour in international operations. Furthermore, Norway has been a driving force in the efforts to establish guidelines for gender mainstreaming in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Police officers who are to take part in international operations are given training on operation-specific challenges relating to gender and conflict, and on resolution 1325 (2000), including on rules against sexual exploitation and abuse. The Norwegian Police Project in Afghanistan runs a project designed to strengthen women's competence and participation in the Afghan Police.

55. The Norwegian-funded capacity-building programme Training for Peace has for several years supported the training of African civilian and police personnel for peace operations in Africa. Strengthening the participation of women in peace operations has been a key aspect of this work. Since 2006, funding for humanitarian projects from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been contingent on the gender perspective being mainstreamed into a project's activities. Norway has supported a number of research projects on women, peace and security. As a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1889 (2009), Norway provided support for an international conference in Oslo in 2009 on the development of indicators.

56. It has been decided that the Norwegian Armed Forces are to draw up guidelines for protecting civilians from sexual violence in conflict situations. Norway has actively promoted Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009). During the period 2007-2009, Norway earmarked NOK 320 million of its humanitarian funds for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality and the fight against sexual violence. Norway has provided funding through the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict for several years. In the Great Lakes region, Norway supports projects providing medical and psychological support and socio-economic rehabilitation of victims of sexual violence. In Liberia, Norway has supported the establishment of women and children protection units at the country's county police stations and in Monrovia since 2006. The Ministry of

Foreign Affairs has established a project on women, peace and security with a view to strengthening the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), and improving coordination between the departments responsible for this important issue.

2.2. Remaining challenges

57. An external review of the implementation of the Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation, which was completed in 2009, points out challenges related to mainstreaming the gender perspective in bilateral cooperation and weak documentation of lessons learned at the country level. It finds that Norway performs relatively well in multilateral cooperation. In response to these challenges, the Government is planning an intensified effort in collaboration with selected embassies and is directing increased attention to mainstreaming the gender perspective in our priority areas of energy, oil, climate change and the environment, and private sector development. For example, the earmarked allocation for women's rights and gender equality is to be targeted more directly at this objective.

IV. Some issues of specific interest

3.1. United Nations reform

58. The United Nations is an important arena for Norwegian development policy. Since the United Nations reform panel presented its recommendations in 2006, Norway has played a proactive role in the efforts to establish a single, robust and independent gender equality unit. Key concerns for Norway are that gender equality be strengthened as a core value and cross-cutting theme in all United Nations organizations, programmes and operations, as well as the Organization's capacity to support stakeholders in government and civil society to achieve gender equality and promote and protect women's rights and empowerment at the country level.

3.2. Gender-based violence

59. Norway would like to play an active role in the international work towards eliminating gender-based violence. Norway welcomes the appointment of Margot Wallström as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and we are encouraged by the ambitious way she has taken on this important task. Norway also supports and is contributing to a proposal for a draft European Council convention on violence against women.

3.3. Gender balance in decision-making

60. Norway addressed gender and climate at the fifty-third session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2009. The Nordic Summit on Climate, Gender and Equality in 2009 issued a declaration on gender and climate that calls upon politicians, organizations and individuals of both genders to assume responsibility for creating a more equal and sustainable society. The declaration also

highlights the importance of applying local knowledge, experiences and needs of both genders to important decision-making processes.

61. Women must be involved in decision-making. Men and women experience the world differently, and must be given equal responsibility — and opportunity — in developing the society of the future.